Partial and Voluntary Fire Protection Systems

Partial fire protection
The Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) requires fire protection in both new and existing buildings. In some cases, the fire protection might only involve part of the building. In other cases, the fire protection may be present throughout the building. Here are some examples of partial fire protection:

- Sprinkler systems protecting windowless basements.
- Sprinkler systems protecting hazardous areas.
- Fire alarm and detection systems protecting high-risk areas.
- Suppression systems protecting commercial cooking operations.

Partial fire protection systems and equipment must meet the following criteria:

- They must be installed so that they will perform the intended function (activate to detect or suppress the fire).
- The devices, as installed, must meet spacing, obstruction, and coverage criteria for the area being protected.
- The devices shall be appropriate for and compatible with the intended protection (for example, a smoke detector should not be used in a smoky, dirty, or dusty environment where nuisance alarms would be caused).
- They must be inspected, tested, and maintained as required by the MSFC.

Partial fire protection systems or equipment might be required protection features or they may be a voluntary feature (see next section).

Voluntary fire protection
Voluntary fire protection systems or equipment are devices installed that are not required by the MSFC. These devices are to be installed insofar as practical with the device’s listing criteria and nationally recognized codes and standards. In some rare cases, there may be no specific installation criteria or nationally recognized standard; these should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

Examples of voluntary fire protection systems might be:

- Limited area fire alarm detection with notification in selected areas (but not throughout the building).
- Partial fire alarm system in a building where a fire alarm system is not required by the MSFC.
- Additional fire extinguishers (beyond those required by the MSFC).
- Limited area fire sprinklers installed in selected areas.
Voluntary fire protection systems and equipment must meet the following criteria:

- They must be installed so that they will perform the intended function (activate to detect or suppress the fire).
- The devices, as installed, must meet spacing, obstruction, and coverage criteria for the area being protected.
- The devices shall be appropriate for and compatible with the intended protection (for example, a smoke detector should not be used in a smoky, dirty, or dusty environment where nuisance alarms would be caused).
- Cannot be used as a substitute or alternate protection for a complete system otherwise required by the MSFC.
- Can be used when such protection is allowed as an alternate or exception by the MSFC (assuming that the installation is proper and the system or device will function and perform as the MSFC intends).
- They must be inspected, tested, and maintained as required by the MSFC.

Permits, licenses and installation
Partial and voluntary fire protection system work must adhere to the state requirements for permitting, contractor licensing, and certification of installers.

The following exceptions exist for contractor licensing and certification of installers:

- Homeowners are allowed by statute to install their own systems or equipment in owner-occupied dwellings.
- Licensed plumbers are allowed to install combination fire sprinkler and domestic water systems.

Permits and plan reviews from the AHJ are required for both partial and voluntary fire protection systems.

Questions
Contact the SFMD 651-201-7221 or by email at fire.code@state.mn.us